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ABSTRACT

With the increasingly diverse student population of today's schools, there is a critical need for school counselors who are able to effectively guide and counsel students of culturally diverse backgrounds. As school counselors work with larger numbers of culturally different students, there is an increasing need for more school counselors who trained to work with culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse student populations. In so doing, school counselors may need to alter their perceptions, learn to counsel and consult with diverse populations, become knowledgeable of other cultures, and more importantly, use culturally appropriate counseling interventions with students and their families. Despite this adoption of multicultural content into the practice and training of school counselors, there is very little literature linking multicultural counseling competence and the services that school counselors provide. Hence, the primary purpose of this article is to describe how multiculturalism applies to the typical services (i.e., counseling, consulting, coordinating, assessment, and classroom guidance) provided by school counselors as part of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. (Contains 65 references.) (Author)

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Running head: INTEGRATING MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN

Integrating Multicultural Perspectives in Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs

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Abstract

This manuscript describes how multiculturalism applies to the typical services (e.g., counseling, consulting, coordinating) provided by school counselors as part of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. The author emphasizes the importance of professional school counselors becoming multiculturally competent in the services they provide culturally different students.

Integrating multicultural perspectives in comprehensive guidance and counseling programs

The current demographics of U. S. schools have challenged school counselors to provide culturally appropriate services to students and their families (Coleman, 1995; Lewis & Hayes, 1991; House & Martin, 1998). In many states (e.g., Texas, California, Florida), people-of-color comprise 50% of the total state's population, and in major cities, students-of-color comprise the highest percentage of public school enrollments (Hacker, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1987). In addition to the increase in diverse student enrollments, the influx of immigrants and non-English speaking students poses a serious problem for school counselors who have been trained to use traditional, Eurocentric approaches to counseling and intervention (Lee & Richardson, 1991).

The literature regarding multicultural counseling competence of professional counselors has focused on three main areas or dimensions: (a) awareness of one's own worldview and how counselors are the products of their own cultural conditioning; (b) knowledge of others' worldviews and cultures; and (c) the development of the necessary skills for work with culturally different clients (Arredondo et al., 1996; Carney & Kahn, 1984). Based on these three dimensions, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development's Professional Standards and Certification Committee set forth Multicultural Competencies and explanatory statements to guide counseling interactions with culturally diverse clients. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) adopted these Competencies in 1997 (Locke, 1998).

In addition to adopting the Competencies, the ASCA also formulated a position statement encouraging school counselors to "take action to ensure students of culturally diverse backgrounds have access to appropriate services and opportunities which promote the maximum development of the individual (ASCA, 1993). Furthermore, the ASCA Ethical Standards (ASCA, 1998) specifically state that the professional school counselor "understands the diverse cultural backgrounds of the counselees with whom he/she works. This includes, but is not limited to, learning how the school counselor's own cultural/ethnic/racial identity impacts her or his values and beliefs about the counsleing process." Numerous school counseling professionals (e.g., Lewis & Hayes, 1991) have even suggested that cultural knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness be integrated into existing school counseling training programs. As a result, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) now requires that school counseling trainees have curricular experiences that explore the implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to school counseling (CACREP, 1994).

Despite this adoption of multicultural content into the practice and training of school counselors, there is very little literature linking multicultural counseling competence and the services that school counselors provide. Hence, the primary purpose of this article is to describe how multiculturalism applies to the typical services (i. e., counseling, consulting, coordinating, assessment, and classroom guidance) provided by school counselors as part of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs.

Counseling

The school counselor is the member of a school's full-time professional staff that will likely provide counseling interventions for students with educational, vocational, personal, and social concerns (ASCA, 1992). Herring (1997) suggests that there are five preconditions for counseling ethnically and culturally diverse students in schools. These preconditions are directly related to the three categories of multicultural counseling competence previously stated. Herring's preconditions suggest that school counselors should:

> (1) Have faith in the students' ability to grow and to fully realize their potential, given responsive, supportive, and developmental intervention across both cultural contexts in which the students are immersed;
>
> (2) Examine their own personal attitudes and personality style and how these characteristics influence how they behave with culturally diverse students;
>
> (3) Understand that sociopolitical forces influence how culturally diverse students act;
>
> (4) Become familiar with the differences in worldviews that characterize ethnic minority students and the implications for counseling; and
>
> (5) Have a clear working knowledge of many approaches to counseling and be able to use the techniques that best accommodate cultural and ethnic differences without aggravating the presenting problems (p. 118).

In essence, multiculturally competent school counselors are able to engage in counseling with culturally different students by integrating their cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills into every aspect of their practice (Pederson & Carey, 1994).

When implementing counseling interventions, multiculturally competent school counselors recognize that there are several factors that must be considered before conceptualizing a student's problem or concern. Some of the factors school counselors will consider are students' racial and/or ethnic identity development, socioeconomic background, country of origin, bilingual/bicultural status, cultural expectations about counseling, family status, and social resources (Herr, 1989). Although many school counselors have been trained to look for sources of student problems within the individual, among culturally diverse students the sources of the problem are often the result of external forces such as racial discrimination, social disadvantage, and/or poverty. Unless the school counselor is aware and culturally sensitive to the effects of these external forces, the school counselor will likely focus only on what may be perceived as the student's internal deficits when in fact the focus should be on external conditions for which the student is not responsible (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). For school counselors to incorporate this "paradigm shift" when conceptualizing student problems is central to providing culturally appropriate counseling interventions in schools.

Individual Counseling

Seeking individual counseling services emerges as a complex phenomenon for students-of-color (Canino & Spurlock, 2000). The literature documents that people-of-color underutilize counseling services in part because their help-seeking behaviors and treatment expectations differ from those of the dominant culture (Giordano & Giordano, 1977; Tseng & McDermott, 1981). For instance, African Americans often distrust mental health providers from traditional institutions other than their churches (Terrell &

Terrell, 1984). Puerto Rican (Garcia-Preto, 1982) and Chinese (Tseng & McDermott) individuals often express distress by somatization and may seek physical rather than psychological assistance.

Although the help-seeking behaviors of people-of-color differ from the majority population, the majority of students-of-color still receive counseling services from school counselors who have been trained to expect traditional help-seeking client behaviors (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Locke & Parker, 1994; Omizo & Omizo, 1989). Multiculturally competent school counselors, however, understand that students from culturally different backgrounds may have varying perceptions of counseling and as a result they will modify their counseling programs to accommodate those perceptions. For instance, a school counselor might not expect all students to use her self-referral system. Instead, the school counselor might create informal situations (e.g., lunches, chats in the hall) where students can talk about concerns or problems. Or, a school counselor might invite religious and spiritual leaders in the community for counseling support for students and families who feel more comfortable discussing their concerns with individuals linked to religious groups.

According to D'Andrea and Daniels (1995) one of the most serious problems in school counseling rests in the fact that "most counseling theories and interventions, which are commonly used in school settings, have not been tested among students from diverse student populations" (p.143). As of date, there are very few individual counseling approaches that were specifically designed and validated for use with specific cultural groups. For this reason, multiculturally competent school counselors are constantly

seeking and developing individual counseling methods and strategies that are effective with culturally different students.

It should also be noted that multiculturally competent school counselors incorporate traditional indigenous practices into their theoretical counseling frameworks. School counselors who work with students from cultural backgrounds that utilize indigenous healing methods might consult with traditional folk healers regarding issues and problems of students (Koss-Chioino, 1995). Likewise, incorporating clergy and other religious leaders in the counseling process may be beneficial and advantageous when working with students from culturally different backgrounds.

Multiculturally competent school counselors are also aware of the pervasive influence that culture has on the counseling process (Wehrly, 1995). In the school setting, counselors should be aware of the impact of culture on students' way of thinking, belief systems, definitions-of-self, decision making, verbal and non-verbal behavior, and time orientation. For instance, some non-Westernized cultures place more emphasis on "being" than on "doing." In the Native American and Asian cultures, "self" is not seen as a separate entity from the group or from nature. And, African Americans and other non-mainstream Western cultures see family as an extended unit that does not necessarily limit itself to "blood" relatives. These varied cultural beliefs and practices can be significant in the counseling process and can have profound effects on the behavior of children and adolescents (Herring, 1997).

Group Counseling

In school settings, group counseling is often the chosen form of counseling for many reasons. First, groups provide an opportunity for school counselors to observe

social interactions among students. Groups also provide students with peer feedback, an opportunity to serve as role models for others, and an opportunity to bond with students experiencing similar issues (Myrick, 1993).

The effective multicultural group leader in the school setting must be sensitive to not only the distinct cultural differences between students but also aware of his/her own cultural biases and prejudices. It is particularly important for group leaders to be accepting and nonjudgmental about the values, lifestyles, beliefs, and behaviors of others and to recognize the value of difference and diversity (Diller, 1999). School counselors who lead groups can learn much about other cultures by asking group members for information and assistance in understanding their diverse backgrounds. According to Holcomb-McCoy (2000) group counselors within the school setting must be able to facilitate the cultural development of group members by:

1. Understanding and acknowledging the reality that students-of-coloar are socialized within a society which people-of-color have a history of suffering stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.
2. Encouraging group members to explore their cultural heritages and experiences.
3. Encouraging group members to explore their attitudes about their racial/ethnic/cultural experiences; and
4. Helping group members develop group norms that reflect the varying cultural values and perspectives of group members.

When composing a group, the school counselor should consider how students from differing cultural backgrounds are likely to relate to each other and to the group leader. The multiculturally competent school counselor should be familiar with the

literature on selecting and planning for a culturally diverse group (e.g., Brown & Mistry, 1994; Davis, Galinsky, & Schopler, 1995). For instance, when reviewing the strengths of same-sex and same-race groups, Brown and Mistry (1994) noted that these groups have advantages when the group task is associated with issues of personal identity, social oppression, and empowerment.

School counselors who lead groups must also keep in mind that students bring diverse patterns of behavior, values, and language to the group (Axelson, 1999). Students might also bring experiences with oppression and particular feelings about themselves, their group identity, and the larger society. When problems such as student dissatisfaction or conflict among group members occur, the school counselor should keep in mind that the problems may be caused by cultural differences, not by an individual member's characteristics or flaws in the group process.

Group counselors in schools should assess how students' backgrounds are likely to affect the way they experience communication and interaction patterns, cohesion, and the overall group culture (Toseland & Rivas, 2001). It is important for school counselors to understand the language, symbols, nonverbal communication patterns of people from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, school counselors must strive to become aware of the nuances of messages sent by group members, including how nonverbal messages differ across various cultures. In addition, the school counselor should consider how cultural groups differ in their use of space, that is, whether distance or closeness is the norm, and what other nonverbal communication norms govern interaction in the culture.

Regarding leadership, group leaders might have difficulty openly discussing the significance of their own cultural differences in the group process (Forsyth, 1999). School counselors, however, should not ignore or avoid topics dealing with culture, race, or diversity when interacting with students in groups. It is imperative that multiculturally competent school counselors model positive cultural dynamics in group settings and use their own self-awareness to enhance students' levels of cultural sensitivity.

Consultation

Despite the attention focused on multicultural counseling, less emphasis has been placed on the significance of culture and ethnicity in the consultation process. Consulting is a significant responsibility for school counselors (Gerler, 1992; Kurpius & Fuqua, 1993; Strein & French, 1984). School counselors may be asked to consult with students, parents, teachers, student services specialists, administrators, or community agency professionals (Dougherty, 1992).

Given the amount of time school counselors spend consulting with parents, teachers, students and administrators of diverse backgrounds, a discussion of multicultural competence of school-based consultants is warranted. Many of the traditional models of consultation (e.g., organizational, behavioral, mental health) fail to address how cultural factors impact the consultation process. In one attempt to describe differences in the consultation process between African American and White teachers in school consultation, Gibbs (1980) found through multiple observations that African American teachers were more focused on the consultants' interpersonal skills whereas White teachers focused more on instrumental skills demonstrated by the consultant. She concluded as a result of this study, that culturally competent school-based consultants

should pay close attention to building trusting relationships with Black teachers in the initial phase of consultation.

School counselors acting in the role of consultant should be sensitive to the cultural differences between the three parties in the consultation process: consultant, consultee, and client. School counselors who consult with culturally different teachers and parents should ensure that the teacher or parent (i.e., consultees) understands that his/her input is welcomed and in many cases necessary for the success of the intervention. It is just as important, however, to consider the cultural differences of the client. Although the consultation process involves indirect contact with the client, the consultant should not forget that the client is the focus of the consultee's problem and therefore, the culture of the client will have an impact on the change process.

In addition to being sensitive to the client's and consultee's culture, multiculturally competent consultants should also focus on conceptualizing the problem/concern of the consultee within a cultural context (Rogers, 2000). Assessing the influence of culture on the consultee's and client's perception of the problem and interpersonal interactions is critical to the multicultural consultation process. Also, being aware of cultural variations in students', teachers', and parents' behaviors is important. For instance, a Taiwanese student who is overly concerned about involving her parents in her college choice should not be considered immature by a consultee because of his/her own cultural beliefs. Because the Taiwanese culture emphasizes parental respect, the consultant must ensure that the student is not penalized for behaving in a culturally appropriate manner.

Language, value differences, and prejudice may all lead to less than accurate information being obtained during the consultation process (Ramirez, Lepage, Kratochwill, & Duffy, 1998). School-based consultants should be cognizant of consultees' and clients' body language, eye contact, manner of speech, issues of biculturality, cooperation versus competition, punctuality, assertiveness, and family values (Jackson & Hayes, 1993). Additionally, school-based consultants should be able to identify and challenge a consultee's stereotypical beliefs and biases because ultimately these faulty perceptions can affect the consultation outcomes. Prejudicial attitudes within the consultation process may be manifested in outright rejection and/or the provision of inadequate interventions. Clearly, school-based consultants need to be vigilant about detecting and dealing with negative racial and/or cultural attitudes (Rogers, 2000).

Coordination

As stated previously, school counselors provide a variety of services (e.g., group counseling, consulting) directly and indirectly to students, parents, and teachers. At the same time, however, school counselors are responsible for coordinating activities and services that involve individuals and programs outside the school. School counselors who serve as coordinators in their schools seek to bring various individuals together to share information, exchange ideas, set goals, and identify and implement interventions with students (Myrick, 1993). A school counselor's coordination activities may range from coordinating a school's peer mediation program to coordinating student assessment procedures. What follows are a brief description of three common activities that school counselors might coordinate: test administration, child study teams, school-wide

programs, and referrals. Aspects related to multicultural competence will be discussed for each.

Test Administration

School counselors are frequently required to coordinate school testing and assessment activities (Schmidt, 1991). This may include organizing testing materials, administering tests, and distributing and interpreting test results for students, teachers, and parents. Multicultural aspects of coordinating school testing includes being knowledgeable of the cultural appropriateness of assessment instruments frequently used in schools, aware of other cultures' perceptions of assessment, and the skills to implement a culturally appropriate assessment procedure. When coordinating testing situations, multiculturally competent school counselors pay careful attention to inappropriate or insensitive assessment techniques, test bias, and the purposes and/or goals for testing. For further information see section on "Multicultural Assessment."

In addition to fair testing procedures and administration, multiculturally competent school counselors ensure that all students understand the purpose, process, and outcome of testing. This is particularly important for students who have recently migrated to the U.S. and don't understand testing practices in this country. Because parents from historically oppressed groups are unaware of the nature of tests, multiculturally competent school counselors attempt to ensure that all parents are educated on testing practices, testing assistance, and testing options. When coordinating test administration, multiculturally competent school counselors also take responsibility for educating all parents of the types of tests used in their child's school.

And finally, multiculturally competent school counselors are aware of the testing options for students whose first language is not English. Generally, the options for these students are to either have a test translated, use interpreters, use tests that are norm-referenced in their first language, or use a bilingual test administrator (Figueroa, 1989). Multiculturally competent school counselors ensure that bilingual students receive a fair and appropriate testing environment as well as an opportunity to receive a fair representation of their skills, abilities, and aptitudes.

Coordinating Child Study Teams

Child study teams or educational management teams are used in most schools to assemble a group of school professionals and parents (e.g., counselor, psychologist, nurse, classroom teacher, administrator) to review the status of a student who is experiencing some type of problem (e.g., reading problem, behavioral problem). School counselors are typically members of this team and help to coordinate them (Myrick, 1993).

From a multicultural perspective, school counselors should be sensitive to the needs of culturally different parents of children who are being discussed in child study team meetings. For instance, multiculturally competent school counselors arrange for interpreters for non-English speaking parents and make any other accommodations for parents who are culturally different. Also, multiculturally competent school counselors take special care to make sure culturally different parents understand the purpose, format, and possible outcomes of these meetings.

Multicultural school counselors are also aware of the possible bias of child study teams when making educational decisions about culturally different students. The

process of decision making in special education, for instance, can be biased because of the subjectivity inherent in the process. Bias tends to influence observations, testing, and educational decision-making (Rubin, 1992). In any case, it is critical for a multiculturally competent school counselor to identify when a student's culture is negatively affecting assessment procedures and consequently, the decision making process of a child study team.

School-Wide Programs

Coordinating structured programs and special events that supplement educational programs has become a major responsibility of school counselors (Fall, 1994). Counselors may coordinate school-wide mentoring programs (Noll, 1997), coping skills training (Kiselica, Baker, Thomas, & Reedy, 1994), conflict resolution programs (Carruthers, Carruthers, Day-Vines, Bostick, & Watson, 1996), and prejudice prevention programs (Ponterotto & Pederson, 1993).

Multiculturally competent school counselors coordinate school-wide programs that are relevant to the needs of all students, particularly those students from culturally different backgrounds. Baker (2000) states that school counselors who plan and present school-wide programs are more successful if they are able to make programs "meaningful to individuals representing all worldviews in their schools" (p. 153). Also, school counselors should ensure that diverse students are selected for active participation in these structured programs.

Coordinating Referrals

Oftentimes, school counselors refer students and their families to resources outside of the school (Downing, Pierce, & Woodruff, 1993; Hobbs & Collison, 1995).

When students' problems are beyond the scope of the regular guidance and counseling services offered in a school, the counselor will refer the student to professionals in the community who have the time, experience, and resources to help. Many school counselors spend many hours building relationships and information about community mental health agencies, private practices in the community, and community leaders with expertise in areas relevant to the school.

Because of increasingly diverse school communities, school counselors must also take time to ensure that their referral sources are representative of their school communities. The ASCA specifically states that school counselors should develop resource lists of "educational and community support services to meet the socioeconomic and cultural needs of culturally diverse students and their families" (p. 322). Atkinson and Juntunen (1994) also recommended that school counselors be familiar with services offered both in ethnic communities and in the larger community. For instance, a school counselor in a community with a large percentage of Jewish students should contact and develop working relationships with local synagogues. Or, a school counselor with a growing number of referrals from gay and lesbian students should contact and assess the services provided by local agencies that specialize in working with gay and lesbian youth.

Assessment

Given the prevalence of standardized achievement and aptitude tests in schools, it is imperative that school counselors understand the appropriateness of assessment instruments with culturally different students (Amour-Thomas, 1992). The assessment of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds is complex and needs to be performed with professional care and consideration. School counselors need to be able to

evaluate instruments that may be biased against certain groups and identify other methods for assessing these students. In addition, school counselors need to be competent in relaying assessment results to students and parents from diverse cultures (Whiston, 2000).

In an effort to address cultural differences and disparities in educational assessment, school counselors should be knowledgeable and familiar with the article entitled, *Multicultural Assessment Standards: A Compilation for Counselors* (Prediger, 1994). This resource integrates the standards related to multicultural assessment from five relevant sources: *Code of Fair Testing Practice in Education, Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests (RUST), Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, Multicultural Competencies and Standards, and Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association.*

While the culturally sensitive assessment process is an area that school counselors should feel competent, the ability to identify and select culturally-appropriate assessment instruments is not as easily attainable. There are very few instruments that have been developed to assess culturally and ethnically diverse student populations (Betz & Fitgerald, 1995). However, school counselors should be aware of instruments that have been restandardized to include a more representative sample of ethnically and linguistically diverse children (e.g., The Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition, Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery—Revised). It is important to remember, however, that there is not one instrument that is totally unbiased (Helms, 1992). Therefore, multiculturally competent school counselors know that their judgement in assessing the cultural appropriateness of an instrument for the individual

and their interpretation of the results are key in the process of culturally sensitive assessment.

Classroom Guidance

Classroom guidance, unlike group counseling, is used to relay information or to instruct a large group of students. The format for group guidance sessions is very similar to a regular lesson in which objectives are formulated and activities provide a means to achieving the objectives. One of the benefits to implementing group guidance is that the counselor is able to interact with large numbers of students (Nicholl, 1994). With that said, classroom guidance is an effective way for school counselors to address cultural sensitivity and issues pertaining to race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities or any diversity-related issue (Bruce & Shade, 1996). School counselors can help students become more culturally sensitive by implementing group guidance sessions focused on the following objectives: to accept and appreciate others' differences, to learn accurate multicultural terminology (e.g., racism, prejudice, ethnicity, oppression), to explore one's biases, and to learn about diverse cultures and ethnic groups.

Multiculturally competent school counselors develop guidance lessons with small group activities because student interaction and discussion is perhaps the best avenue to encourage students to interact with other students different from themselves (Corey & Corey, 1997). For instance, students can meet in small groups to talk about their ethnic and/or racial histories. Having students recognize each other's ethnic heritage can help them recognize the uniquenesses of all cultures and dispel stereotypical beliefs. School counselors can also use classroom guidance to discuss the impact of prejudiced behavior in our society. Lessons regarding topics such as racism, sexism, oppression, and

prejudice should be well-planned and geared for students' developmental level. Sample classroom guidance lessons might include the following activities related to multicultural issues:

1. Case studies related to students of color and racism: students are given cases and asked to discuss the feelings of characters and ways to solve problems dealing with prejudiced behavior.
2. Defining stereotype and brainstorm stereotypes that students have or have heard about different groups of people. Discuss the danger of stereotypes.
3. Interviews of classmates about their experiences with prejudices and biases. This activity is then followed by a group discussion.
4. Invite people of color from community to come to discuss their personal racial/ethnic histories. Students should have prepared questions for the panelists about how they have dealt with prejudiced people, racism, and oppression.

Conclusion

With the increasingly diverse student population of today's schools, there is a critical need for school counselors who are able to effectively guide and counsel students of culturally diverse backgrounds. As school counselors work with larger numbers of culturally different students, there is an increasing need for more school counselors who trained to work with culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse student populations. In so doing, school counselors may need to alter their perceptions, learn to counsel and consult with diverse populations, become knowledgeable of other cultures, and more importantly, use culturally appropriate counseling interventions with students and their families. Clearly, this article only touches upon the beginning of a process of becoming

multiculturally competent. However, engagement in this process provides for school counselors an unparalleled opportunity for personal, as well as professional growth.

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